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Department  
for Education

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## T Levels: what they are

T Levels are new 2-year courses, designed with employers, to give young people the skills that industry needs. From 2020, they will give post-GCSE students a technical alternative to A levels and will help them to get a skilled job.

T Levels will provide a mixture of:

- technical knowledge and practical skills specific to their chosen industry or occupation
- an industry placement of at least 45 days in their chosen industry or occupation
- relevant maths, English and digital skills

## common workplace skills

Students who achieve a T Level will get a nationally recognised certificate, which will set out what they have achieved as part of the programme.

T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom or workshop-based learning and 'on-the-job' experience in the following industries:

- digital
- construction
- education and childcare
- engineering and manufacturing
- health and science
- legal, finance and accounting
- hair and beauty
- agriculture, environment and animal care
- business and administration
- catering and hospitality
- creative and design

Through doing a T Level, students will be able to:

- learn broad core knowledge and practical skills relevant to all occupations in their chosen industry from the beginning of their course
- develop specialist technical skills relevant to at least one occupation

## T Levels: when they will start

T Levels will be phased in starting from the 2020 to 2021 academic year with a small number of providers.

The very first T Level subjects will be taught from September 2020 in more than 50 colleges and other education and training providers, which means children entering year 10 in September 2018 will be the first to be able to study them. A [list of the 2020 providers](#) has been published.

The first subjects that can be studied in 2020 will be digital, construction and education and childcare.

In time, T Levels are expected to replace many of the vocational and technical education qualifications currently offered to post-16 technical education students.

## How T Levels will work with other post-16 choices

T Levels will become one of 3 main options when a student reaches the age of 16. They will be equivalent to 3 A levels and will sit alongside:

- apprenticeships for students who wish to learn a specific occupation 'on the job'
- A levels for students who wish to continue academic education

When they complete a T Level, students will be able to choose between moving into:

- a skilled occupation
- higher or degree level apprenticeships
- higher level technical study, including higher education

Department for Education (DfE) recognises that the current range of technical qualifications is confusing and that some have been more successful than others. T Levels will simplify choices for post-16 technical education for students, parents and providers.

The department will review which qualifications it should fund alongside T Levels and A levels. It also intends to engage with interested parties throughout the design of the review.

Both T Levels and apprenticeships will be based on the same standards for their relevant occupations, approved by Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA).

The course content for T Levels will reflect that they:

- enable students to learn occupational skills inside and outside the workplace
- are broader in content than apprenticeships
- may have a different duration to apprenticeships

## Funding for T Levels

DfE has committed additional funding specifically for T Levels – rising to an extra £500 million per year.

The additional funding recognises that T Levels will give students more learning time than many current technical education options – in some cases an increase of 50%.

On 2 October the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds, announced £38 million capital funding to help ensure that the group of 2020 T Level providers have the equipment and facilities necessary to deliver T Levels from September 2020.

## How T Levels are being developed

The first T Levels are being collaboratively developed by DfE, IfA, education providers and employers.

The government has published its response to the [consultation on the implementation of T Levels](#).

The outline content for the first T Levels are being designed by employers with support from DfE and IfA. DfE's development plans for T Levels are being tested with students, education providers and employers. They will be continually reviewed, refined and retested.

This approach means that, in some cases, final details about how the programme will work will be confirmed later than education providers and employers may be used to. This is to ensure all views are being taken into consideration and acted upon during development - and the resulting qualification is effective and deliverable.

At a later date, technical education functions will transfer to IfA (which, at that time, will change its name to

the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education).

A procurement exercise was launched in September 2018 to identify awarding organisations to develop the full content and assessments for the core and occupational specialisms of the first 3 T Levels (for approval by the IfA).

## T Level structure

The subject range of T Level programmes will be defined by IfA's [occupational maps](#). The IfA [consulted](#) on the occupational maps and has published its [response](#).

Groups of employers define the skills and requirements for T Levels for each industry by participating in '[T Level panels](#)'.

The T Level panels will also develop the outline content for the qualification, based on the same standards as apprenticeships. These standards are approved by the IfA.

Individual education providers will decide how to structure the T Level courses they offer. This will enable them to deliver the programme's mandatory components in the most effective way for students.

Total time is expected to be around 1,800 hours over 2 years (including the industry placement of at least 45 days). This is a significant increase over most current technical education programmes.

## T Level programmes

T Level programmes will include the following mandatory elements:

- core underpinning theories, concepts and workplace skills, tailored for their chosen industry or occupation
- occupationally specialist skills
- an industry placement with an employer, which will last for at least 45 working days
- a minimum standard in maths and English if students have not already achieved them

## Core component

The 'core' will be split into 2 parts.

1) One part will develop 'underpinning' technical knowledge and skills relevant to all occupations relevant to the T Level's industry. This will require students to:

- understand how the industry works
- understand how occupational specialisms fit within the industry
- know what the working practices in the industry are like

2) The other part is an employer-set project which will require students to apply their core knowledge and skills to achieve an employer-set challenge or brief.

## Specialism

Industry or occupational specialisms will be based on the same standards as apprenticeships. For T Levels, these skills will be delivered in a 'classroom-based' environment (including, for example, workshops and simulated working environments).

T Level students will therefore aim to achieve 'threshold competence'. This will provide evidence of achievement in work-specific skills that shows they can work in their chosen industry. In some cases, these competences will be expected to be developed fully when in work, with appropriate support and development.

The time taken to reach 'threshold competence' will vary from T Level to T Level, in the same way it does in apprenticeships.

## T Level industry placements

T Levels must contain a meaningful industry placement with an employer. These will last a minimum of 45 working days, but can last up to 60 working days.

Different ways of carrying out T Level industry placements are being piloted to see which work best for specific industries and providers. For example, the placement could be a continuous block of working days or distributed across the study programme. DfE will confirm how industry placements should be delivered when the pilots have been completed.

Additionally, DfE is [funding providers to deliver around 23,000 industry placements during the 2018 to 2019 academic year](#).

Both these schemes will help to:

- test the industry placement concept
- learn from the trial
- build providers' and employers' confidence

DfE has proposed [target standards](#) for providers and employers to meet on industry placements. These will be reviewed and confirmed after the pilots have been completed.

## Grading T Levels

If students achieve all the required components of a T Level they will get an overall pass grade listed on their T Level certificate. This will be either a pass, merit or distinction.

The grades for the core component and occupational specialisms will also be listed separately on the certificate.

## Students not ready to start a level 3 programme

DfE recognises that not all students who wish to start a T Level will be ready to do so at age 16. The department plans to offer a 'transition' to help students get to the standard required to start a T Level.

# Important dates in T Level delivery

## January 2019

Information will be published about how providers can express an interest to deliver T Levels in the academic year 2021 to 2022.

## Summer 2019

Detailed funding information available for the 2020 providers including an indicative T Levels funding allocation

## Autumn 2020

First T Level programmes start for specific occupations in 3 industries:

- software application development (digital industry)
- design, surveying and planning (construction industry)
- education (education and childcare industry)

## Get involved in T Level delivery: providers

We want to continue to work positively with all providers, particularly to understand more about the type of support providers need to make the introduction of T Levels successful.

Find out more about [next steps for providers and how to get involved](#).

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